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Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Licensed Marine Engineers Boarding Cruiseships

Three U.S. Coast Guard-licensed marine engineers will join the current roster of environmental professionals boarding cruise ships this week. A 2006 citizens' initiative calling for Ocean Rangers to be aboard each cruise ship while in Alaska waters specifies that they be licensed marine engineers. Their addition to the current interim observer program brings the State one step closer to a fully realized Ocean Ranger program. The full program is scheduled to begin with the next field season.

The engineers and other observers are predominantly going aboard at one port and disembarking at the next. While aboard, they work through a schedule of observations that includes inspecting wastewater systems, reviewing environmental records and serving as on-board contacts for DEC staff.

This first cruise ship season following passage of the initiative last fall has been focused on DEC building the Ocean Ranger program with the objective of implementing the full program next year. Efforts have included identifying training needs and curricula, developing inspection and observation protocols and documenting environmental systems onboard large vessels. At the same time, the interim observers serve many of the Ocean Ranger functions verifying environmental and sanitation compliance onboard cruise ships as required by the new law.

DEC will hold a public meeting later this fall to review and evaluate the results of the interim observer program and to describe plans for completing the transition to the full Ocean Ranger program beginning with the 2008 cruise ship season. The date and time of that meeting will be announced when scheduled.

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